

Project "Slammer" Research Proposal

UNDERSTANDING ESPIONAGE: SUBJECTS' OWN PERSPECTIVES
AND CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

BACKGROUND: Previous espionage research regarding which has considered "human factors," has concentrated on the personal dynamics of those who commit this crime. Much of this work has been in the form of the single case study, or involved the similarities found among several cases which were studied individually. Information for these studies has predominantly been drawn from case file data, which included historical material, personnel records and the results of substantive investigations. Actually, this has been the traditional methodology for examining criminal behavior in general, and this is but an application of the technique to the crime of espionage.

Recent initiatives developed by members of the FBI Behavioral Science Unit suggest a practical, innovative methodology. This approach asks the offenders themselves about their crimes. It has, for instance, provided numerous insights into the motivations and methods of serial murderers. Direct inquiry of subjects, however, may not always be successful. Some incarcerated felons have no desire to cooperate, while others may provide information which is intentionally misleading. Nonetheless, many do participate. Apparently the opportunity to aid in research reinforces their self-esteem, assuages guilt, or both.

Another innovation is suggested by the psychologists who conduct entrance screening at CIA. Their astute observation is that environmental/situational factors appear to be distinct influences upon a number of spies who were otherwise (psychologically) unremarkable when compared to their peers. These situations are "triggers" which are perceived by subjects to justify illegal behavior. It would seem that this interaction of personality factors and life circumstances produces a compelling sense of entitlement which motivates espionage. Apparently the key to understanding this motivation lies in subjects' personal perceptions of their experiences. It would then seem to follow, that the FBI's direct approach would be essential to unlocking the importance of contextual issues which have catalytic effects.

The most obvious potential shortcoming of the direct interview approach questions the validity of the information provided by incarcerated felons. While it may not be possible to resolve the veracity of all data, interviews of subjects' closest associates at the time of the offense could be telling. Spouses, lady-friends or men-friends may be able to validate and amplify subjects' statements. Further, co-workers could reveal information that would provide insights into conditions in the work place. For instance, peers in the work place may be able to describe presumptions about the subject they entertained during the period that the crimes occurred. This final observation may identify barriers perceived by employees to reporting possible security concerns.

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STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES: This study will examine espionage agents by exploring the many interactive contextual factors which spies themselves believe to have influenced their motivation. In the past, most espionage research has viewed subjects externally to form descriptive personality assessments. Information has not been obtained directly from subjects to offer their own perspectives. Consequently, this study will focus on spies' own thoughts, feelings and beliefs regarding their decision to commit espionage, presumptions regarding detection, and their reactions to the potential consequences of their acts. Further, this study will refine a methodology for continuing inquiry into the crime of espionage.

Delineated Goals:

1. Increase our understanding of subjects who have committed espionage to enhance future security screening.
2. Detail situational circumstances that may have influenced the act of espionage.
3. Examine system effects that may have diluted or impeded the maintenance of security.
4. Develop a procedure to continually collect and analyze behavioral science aspects of espionage.

METHOD

Cases: Cases to be studied , to the greatest extent possible, need be representative of typical instances of the crime. This is so that results will be generalizable to the most frequently encountered circumstances. Sensational cases, which are noteworthy only because of their notoriety, may occur only rarely, thereby limiting their potential for prediction. Further, cases need to be reasonably recent. Very old cases will potentially suffer from a lack of uniformity to current conditions, not to mention the influences of time on memory. The sample also should represent community-wide investigations, so that idiosyncratic differences within agencies do not distort conclusions. Member agencies of SECOM will nominate cases by presenting summaries to the project working group, which will select cases for study. Detailed case review will precede each subject interview.

Subjects: All personnel who are subjects of this study will be spies who have been caught, tried and convicted; they need to have been fully adjudicated. Further, these felons must have exhausted all appeals and be serving their sentences free of any further legal redress. To confirm the purpose of this study, and to more fully assist in cooperation, each subject must be authorized immunity from further prosecution for their offense. Additionally, others who volunteer to participate as observers of the subject (while in commission of the crime) should be offered both immunity and anonymity.

Data Collection: All subjects will be interviewed to obtain detailed historical data regarding their maturational development. This history will explore the nature of relationships, the engendering of loyalty and effects of critical incidents. Psychological testing will be conducted to obtain

objective measures of current functioning, to include personality traits and dispositions. These assessments will also permit comparisons to earlier psychometric findings (where available) to provide an index of change from entrance security screening. Interviews will be videotape recorded to enhance review and permit refinement of procedure.

Procedure: This research will be conducted in three phases. Phase one will consist of a pilot study to develop technique, both in content and style. Phase two will comprise a series of four subject interviews. This phase will be a preliminary evaluation of progress based on an arbitrarily small number of cases. It will permit further procedural refinement while allowing for initial analyses as a check for the utility of the data. The third phase will consist of continuing interviews so that a data base can be established, procedure can be modified for greater relevance, and cases themselves can have more thorough conclusions. In summary, the procedures are intended to be self refining, and in time, permit a course of action to more fully resolve each case examined (e.g., to provide further insights to include possibly revising assessments of information compromised). Eventually, all adjudicated cases could be considered for behavioral science review, providing an on-going source of research and investigation. Figure 1 depicts the procedural overview.

Projected Deadlines

	4 Months	7 Months	Continual
Phase I	Pilot Study (1 case)		
Phase II		Preliminary Study (4 cases)	
Phase III			On-Going Study (Reporting at 6 month intervals)

FIGURE 1. PROCEDURAL OVERVIEW

Figure 1 also presents suggested deadlines for accomplishing goals. While these deadlines are only approximate, they are offered to shape expectations for reporting. Initiation of Phase I will, of course, require a number of supportive actions.

REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIATING RESEARCH

Personnel: It is proposed that personnel to support this study be formally appointed as either research team members (who will actually conduct the interviews) or to the project working group. Team members should be consistent throughout Phases I and II. By the time Phase III is initiated, procedures should be sufficiently standardized that individual roles could be conducted by others. The team should be small in size to facilitate interaction, aid standardization and intensify the learning experience. It ought to consist of two behavioral scientists, and two security investigators. One of the behavioral scientists will be the project leader; one of the security experts will function administratively as a point of contact and expeditor for the many "behind the scenes" actions and coordinations. Additionally, there should be clerical support, preferably from the same office as the security agent who acts as functional administrator. Importantly, in addition to being multidisciplinary, the team and working group should have multiagency representation.

Consultants to the team will comprise a working group. Resources will include additional behavioral scientists, security, legal, and data automation personnel. Consultants will attend an initial planning session to develop structured interview content and format, design preliminary data analysis procedures, and select an initial case for study. Results of this first working group meeting will be refined by the team and tested in the subsequent pilot study (Phase I of the project). The working group will then again meet to review salient videotaped portions of interviews, discuss findings and restructure the procedure as appropriate. Phase II would then follow, with an additional working group meeting to be held to select additional cases. The working groups may also be convened prior to reporting Phase II findings. Phase III presumes sufficient refinement of procedure to preclude the need for routine scheduling for working group assistance.

Coordination: In addition to making team and working group selection, there will be requirements for a variety of essential arrangements. These will include scheduling and arranging meetings, nominating cases for study, obtaining grants of immunity (and authorization for anonymity of subjects's associates), contacting prospective subjects to determine their voluntariness, and arranging for interviews of subjects and their former associates.

Equipment: Psychological testing materials and videotaping equipment are the only items required. Access to word processing and minicomputers for data analysis is also necessary.

Funds: The primary expenditure is anticipated to arise from travel expenses required for meetings and interviews. Additional costs may be incurred if members of the team or working group are contractual employees. Further, consideration ought to be given to compensating subjects' former associates for their time if they are not in governmental employment. Due to the variability of these factors, an estimate of expenses is difficult. Nonetheless, Phase I would be expected to cost approximately ten thousand dollars and Phase II, twenty-five thousand dollars. More precise estimates per interview for Phase III should be established by completion of Phase II. The first year of this study is therefore estimated to cost approximately 35 thousand dollars.

CONCLUSIONS: The proposed study is intended to be a community-wide effort to re-examine selected espionage cases from multiple sources and disciplines. It is unprecedented in scope and is designed to provide technology for continuing insights into improving our national security. In the spirit of this cooperative effort, review by the SECOM committee is hoped to offer recommendations by which this proposal can be enhanced further. This study is a reflection of the resourcefulness of the committee, and initiatives it has taken by stimulating interest through two behavioral science symposia.

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